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THE
PRIMARY CHARGE,
DELIVERED
BEFORE THE CONVENTION
OF THE
Protestant Episcopal Church in South Carolina,
IN
ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH, CHARLESTON,
ON THURSDAY, THE 15TH FEBRUARY, 1856.
BY THE RIGHT REV. THOS. F. DAVIS, D. D.
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CONVENTION.

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THE
PRIMARY CHARGE
OF THE
RT. REV. THOMAS F. DAVIS, D.D.
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF SOUTH-CAROLINA, ETC.

BRETHREN OF THE CLERGY:

As this is our third Diocesan Convention since my consecration to the office of a Bishop, I deem it my duty to deliver you an Episcopal Charge, agreeably to the general Canon of the Church. I feel under the deepest obligation to speak to you nothing unadvisedly—without due consideration, and the most conscientious and thorough conviction. In considering upon what subject I should address you, I have thought it better to pass over the current events of the day, which are continually brought before you in the various periodicals, and direct your attention to a subject of continuing and substantial importance—one which can never lose its interest and value, and with which we are compelled to come into daily connection—one, our views of which necessarily shape our practical character and conduct. I mean the Church of Christ in its essential constitution, and visible organization.

After all that has been said and written upon the subject, there is perhaps no branch of Christian theology more worthy of thorough study, than this. If we refer only to the external existence and the visible and historic power of the Church, we are furnished with a subject of absorbing interest. Our view must not be narrow, but comprehensive. It must carry within its range the mind not only of the theologian, but of the historian, the patriot—the true philosopher of civilization. It is not my purpose to justify or extenuate any errors of the Church, past or present; but to point the

attention to those radical principles of Christianity, and that power of its moral life, which, however impeded through the medium of their communication, have still rendered it the fertilizer and evangelizer of the world. Christ has ever been the Ruler of its empires. The history of the nations has been graduated according to His will and power, and evolved to the purposes of social and civil good, and of Christian redemption and salvation. This is, indeed, the true philosophy of history. God has been in the world. God in Christ and with his Church. God, thus, according to his own will, moving all things to his own ends of Christian manifestations and triumph. Nations have been convulsed, torn, revolutionized, overcome, but all for improvement, and for the final glory of the Cross. New and improved forms have been thrown out—new revelations made—new principles established—a new life given—all for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and its ultimate glory. Oppositions and difficulties ever exist, but the divine and Christian element is struggling onward and upward—deepening its roots and spreading its branches. Christianity is never finally overcome, or destroyed. It rises again, and vindicates its claim to a supernatural power. To the truth of this, the past history of the world bears witness. To it, the condition and aspects, the progress and auguries of the present age, bear witness. Christianity has mastered the strong nations. The Saxon blood is Christian. Hand in hand, the Bible and modern civilization are marching on together. This is God's progress and power over the world. The end will come. Christianity will actuate and survive all changes—be acknowledged an invisible, mysterious, supernatural agency, and fill the whole earth. This is pleasing to the mind, and gives strength to faith—uniting her inward power with the palpable working of the world's machinery. But, brethren, we must look nearer than this. That which thus moves, and guides, and graduates, and governs mankind, must possess within itself an essential life of inexpressible energy and universal application to the wants and improvement of men. And this truth, of surpassing interest in itself,

presses most thrillingly upon the Christian heart, when it is awakened to its immortal destiny, and recognizes in the moving agency of the world its own spiritual and eternal life—its birth to glory and to God. This spiritual presence of God in his Church, more definitely considered, is more immediate. Its influence is upon the heart, and draws towards it all the sympathies of the religious life. It at once fixes Christian thought. What is this holy and life-imparting influence? Whence its source? How is it communicated? What are its relations to the visible elements and appointed institutions with which it is connected? How does it actuate them? What is their union, yet several significance and character? These are the questions that throng upon the mind, as we dwell upon the Church of Christ.

Now it is obvious that these principles are of the utmost importance. We cannot escape their application to ourselves in our individual, spiritual life. Their right understanding and reception is the food of the soul. Nor is their practical value less, as we consider the present condition of the Christian world. In this world every Christian lives, and in some portion of it he must take his stand. He is not allowed to separate himself and stand alone. The very genius and life of his religion is in its associative law. Its form is that of community, founded upon a common humanity fallen into sin, and inheriting spiritual life through a common Redeemer, both human and divine. We must live in union with the Church of Christ. It is with us the law of life. There are our obligations, and there the nutriment of our souls. Now, there is no way by which we can truly settle the present positions of Christianity, but by an independent and thorough inquiry into the nature of the Christian Church. And without a just understanding of this, none of us can be rightly satisfied with our present condition. We may indeed be indifferent about all this, and care not where we fix ourselves. But the very principle of such a course is destructive of all *faith*, and strikes directly at the Christian life. But there is another point of greater value, and drawing still more deeply. Suppose our

formal position in the Church to be exactly right—right in the outward propriety of its own constitution, and right in relation to all others—still would it be altogether *wrong* to us, if we understood not, and entered not into the spirit of its life. Its interior power—its working of life unto life—the Spirit of God with it, is the distinguishing characteristic of the church. It is the dispensation of the Holy Ghost.

What, then, is the Church's radical constitution? Upon what is it fundamentally built? Undoubtedly Christ himself: Christ in His person and offices—the incarnation of the Son of God—redemption through Him—salvation in His blood. As it is the divine nature which is the Subsistence or Person of the Son of God, into union with which the human nature has been assumed, so it is the Person of the Son of God, both human and divine, that is the origin and foundation of the Church of Christ. The Church is founded upon the incarnation of Christ. Its great truth is, that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. This doctrine may be wrongly represented in its mode of application—may be wrested to the purposes of error and superstition; but surely it can never be denied to be the primary truth of Christianity, and the life and food of the Christian Church. Were it necessary, I could establish this by appeals to theologians of high authority, and different grades of opinion. But I do not think it necessary; it is a clear, elementary truth. The Church is founded upon Christ. Christ's humanity, in union with, and perfected by his divinity, gives the Church its being, and is the life of our souls. Here then we must begin, and here come back, if we have wandered. This truth must ever be with us, actuate all our opinions and emotions, penetrate our very hearts, and dwell there for ever—that in and from Christ alone is His Church.

And this prepares us for another inquiry. In what is the life and essence of Christianity? without which there can neither be a Church nor salvation. I reply, in *living union* with Christ in His Person and offices. The human spirit, through the divine Spirit, must be brought into a union of life with the eternal Son of God.

Without this, there may be a *soul*, but there can be no *Christian soul*—no soul born unto God, and made the inheritor of immortal joys. Without this, there can be no offices, nor administrations in the Church, which are not merely inoperative and dead. And there is nothing capable of being brought into this living union with Christ, but man himself—man, in his soul and body, which are Christ's. I speak of essential, spiritual union with Christ; and I say that nothing is capable of it, but that humanity which He took into union with Himself, and redeemed by His humanity. All else can fulfil but functions, and are subsidiary only to this. In no sectarian spirit—God forbid—but from what I would have to be the very depths of a catholic soul, would I express these mighty and essential truths of Christ's kingdom. May God write them deeply upon our hearts! Why should not every Christian enter with full faith into these truths, and embrace them with his whole being? Why not insist upon yielding up his soul to them, as Christ's essential truth and power, without regard to consequences? No fear of what may happen—no recoil from fanatical and disorganizing proceedings in others—no adherence to any particular system—no motive, no bias, no mode of interpretation—no reliance upon observances, or external constitutions, should separate us from these vital truths, or weaken their power over our own souls. These are the interpreters of truth in other things. They give life and power to sacraments and all visible ordinances. These I am very far from having any wish to depreciate. But their character, their life, is in connection with these deeper truths and derived from them. But I am not now speaking of the Church's economy, but of her life; and you must permit me to speak freely, and without stint. We are dealing with the very life of divine truth. The subject carries us to the very throne of God, and the blood of atonement. I say then, that Christ is the foundation and life of His Church. The only foundation: "other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Its true and proper life: "I am the true vine; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth

much fruit ; for without me ye can do nothing." Here is the source of life. Christ imparting Himself to the believing soul, and that soul receiving Him by its faith—faith resting only upon the Lord Jesus, yet working by love and purifying the heart—faith not dead, but living, and quickening all the energies and affections of humanity. If it were in the power of words to vitalize these truths—to impress them more deeply and pervadingly on our hearts—to stamp them there, as Christ our image, presence, *life*—I would multiply words, I would never cease, until the full purposes I seek were accomplished—until we all not only acknowledged these truths with our understandings, but received them entirely, were permeated by them throughout our whole religious faith and consciousness. They must not only form the centre of faith, but must shape and graduate all our opinions. It is now, I believe, conceded, in natural philosophy, that it is life which gives development to its living manifestations—that life precedes and moulds its organic forms. So, in the Church, it is life, spiritual life, life from Christ, that precedes, actuates, and moulds the Church in all her organic forms. If so, then every department of the visible structure must receive its construction from this law of life. In other words, our construction of the Church must begin here, with Christ and His living influence, and be traced up through the sacraments and all other institutions ; not begin with *these*, as stand-points, and run down to Him. The sacraments are not primary, but secondary—not original, but representative—not the sources of life in themselves, but receive that life which through them is imparted. Thus, then, is the source of life and of authority coming from Christ, through the Eternal Spirit, and subordinately through the agencies of the Church, to our own souls.

The next point I make is to inquire who form the Church of Christ ? The reply is, the body of believers, the whole body of disciples. In the New Testament the Apostles ever recognize the entire assembly of the faithful, in any given place, as the Church. From the present investigation, I of course exclude the Apostles

themselves. The history of Church organization in the New Testament is this. Men are converted to the faith through the preaching of the Apostles, are baptized into the Christian faith, are united in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship—have appointed ministers, bishops or presbyters, and deacons, and finally added to them Bishops in our present sense of the word; and all these constitute the Church. And I will add, that the formation of this Church was gradual, both in time, and in the structure of its economy. I state this because I most sincerely believe it to be true, and I wish it to be weighed well by those who hear me. At the same time I am perfectly aware that I am treading upon delicate ground. From these premises have been drawn the conclusions, first, that the source of authority and power is from the Church herself—that she is a self-organizing association, developing according to circumstances; and secondly, that the sources of life are from within outwards, as it is expressed by Neander, and much repeated by others. Both of these conclusions I deny entirely. I affirm that the premises are true, and appeal to the Scriptures; and appealing to the same Scriptures, I deny the conclusions. There is nothing there whatever of the Church's being self-creating. But the unchanging theory is, that all authority comes from Christ to the Apostles, from the Apostles to the Church, and there remains with those upon whom the Apostles had settled it in their respective departments. And as to proceeding from within outwards, it sounds very much like the German doctrine of internal revelation. But whether so or not, it is not true in any intelligible sense. Spiritual life and authority come from Christ through the living agencies and the institutions of the Church to the souls of believers. How can they possibly be said to go out from the souls of believers to organize the Church? Those souls become *believing*, and are born by these holy influences coming into them. They are receptive, not creative. I am thus explicit, that my real position may be distinctly understood. Having made these explanations, I proceed to the more general consideration of my subject.

The Church of Christ did not originate on the day of Pentecost. This presents a point, I think, deserving much consideration. Assuming this as the origin of the Church, limiting its idea too much to the structure then erected, and giving to it an unelastic and absolute interpretation, I suppose to be the chief source of the opinion, that the Church rests in outward constitutions, and that they are the essence of its existence. But it was not then that her foundations were laid, or then that she received the breath of creation. Then, indeed, its risen Lord gave paramount power to those upon whom He had already bestowed paramount authority to preach its doctrines, administer its sacraments, gather in disciples, and constitute its organization in its ultimate and permanent form. And I respectfully submit that the college of the Apostles was not that permanent form. That is ordinary, and to continue until the end of the world. The dispensation of the Apostles was special, temporary, extraordinary, and miraculous: they were to the Church what none have been since. The Bishops of the Church are not Apostles, nor, strictly speaking, successors of the Apostles. They had no successors, and were not intended to have any. It was not the nature of their office to have successors. Prophets do not go in regular line, but are distinct, divine creations. And these were the greatest of prophets. A distinct office, or at least, a distinct order in the Church, was the Apostolate. I cannot now stop to establish this. The limits of this discourse do not permit me to argue out every point. I must simply submit the statement to your better judgment. The model and authority for the present Church is not the extraordinary and temporary mission of the Apostles, but the ordinary and permanent episcopal constitution erected by them, rising up gradually under their hands in the progress of the Church—by them through the Holy Ghost settled, and left as the abiding inheritance of Christ's people. Under this settled episcopal organization the Bishops are the chief executive officers, as the Apostles were under theirs. And so far, and with due limitations, the Bishops are the successors of the Apostles. Nor are the Bishops to

be considered separately, but as parts of a concrete state, all of which succeeds, not the especial Apostolic mission, but the primitive Church permanently established.

Now, consider the doctrine, that the Church originated on the day of Pentecost, or that then its exclusive economy was formed, and see how deeply it draws. If this be so, where was the Church from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Christ—from Christ's baptism to the day of Pentecost? Shall we ignore all these dispensations, and thrust Christ out of the world? Was there a Church of Christ in the world from Adam to Abraham? Yes? or No? Will any say, No? I think not. It would be too daring an effort against the Lord of glory by his own disciple. Besides, it would be too absurd in any one who receives the Bible as containing the Christian faith. But if yes, then is the appointed external constitution of the Church not of the essence of its existence. For what was its constitution during that period? And where is the letter of its appointment? That there was some outward administration, I grant: that it was usually in the hands of the father or elder brother of the family, I think presumptively established; built, however, upon a natural, rather than a positive basis. But surely there was no specially appointed order to be of the essence of the Church's existence. So in like manner from Abraham to Moses. But it may be said, from Moses to Christ there was an appointed and very rigid discipline, with heavy penalties, and made tests of Church relations. Yes; but it was not that set up on the day of Pentecost, and therefore that was not the origin of the Church, nor its exclusive form. There were Churches before that day without that economy, and there may be after, for the economy of the Church is not its life and essence. But let me not be misunderstood. I acknowledge, of course, the authority of the episcopal constitution. Else why am I here to-day? I acknowledge that it is exclusive; but in *tanto*, not in *toto*. It is exclusive as the appointed and legitimate constitution and authority. It is not exclusive of spiritual life, nor of all Church character. Let me illustrate this in the instances of

which I have been speaking—the Patriarchal, and Jewish dispensations. The Jewish system was rigid, and exclusive. Of what was it exclusive, both before and after? Let us consider the transitions of the Church from one form to another, the necessities of things, and the just construction of positive institutions. We shall find some valuable principles to guide us on our way. Judaism proceeded directly from God. Claim of divine original can rise no higher. Yet we find in its whole history plainly this truth, that it is not divine origin that gives practical construction to a positive institution, but the nature of the institution itself. Or, in other words, God, in making a special positive appointment, does not intend it to be subversive of laws of providence already existing, but to be interpreted with them and by them. There was a change from the Patriarchal system to the Jewish. The first was merged in the last, to all who were the subjects of this change. What was the effect? Did it obliterate all previous relations between God and man through Jesus Christ? Surely, No. Did it render less those relations in them who were not partakers of the new dispensation, and had never heard of it? We certainly think not, as may be proved by instances. But I prefer the appeal to divine wisdom and beneficence. All God's interpositions in our behalf are not privative and destructive, but additional, remedial, and preservative. In each change there is benefit, and the rule of God's providence is, "We are not under the law, but under grace." But again, as rigid as was the discipline of Judaism, was it in such wise inflexible that any breach in its positive economy would operate a destruction of its Church state? The contrary is true throughout its history, and may be instanced in the change from a theocracy to a monarchy in the separation of the ten tribes from the remaining two, and in the actual condition of the Priesthood at the coming of Christ. But once more, did this new form of the Church establish any new and exclusive principles of redemption and of eternal life? There is the radical question that underlies the whole subject. I reply, No. These are not changeable. The depths of the mysteries of life lie

not in the Church's form, or outward being, but in divine counsels—in the incarnation of the Son of God, and atonement in His blood. What, then, did the Jewish system effect? A new discipline for man, founded in divine wisdom—remedial of the errors and corruptions of the world's history—necessary for the times that then were—intended for farther ends, and effective in the fulfilment of God's will, in the government of the world through Christ, and the ushering in the fulness of His spiritual kingdom. Carry forward this principle, and we shall see what was done on the day of Pentecost. Then was the origin of the Church's new, evangelic, and catholic polity, not the establishment of the laws of her being.

But the appeal is made to the Fathers of the Church, and it is affirmed that they speak of the order of the Church as essential, and cut off those not in union with that order from the Church itself. Now here it were easy to cast away the Fathers altogether, and explicitly to deny their authority. But this is not the way to meet an argument, or to satisfy those who feel that there is force in the appeal, and that it at least needs explanation. It is impossible for me to enter into the whole question of the Fathers; I can only take a few points necessary for my purpose. I acknowledge the authority of the Fathers—not extraordinary and absolute, but ordinary and qualified—and as such, to be inquired into and weighed, but with respect, and with the consideration due to their position. I acknowledge too, that there run through their writings currents of original truth showing their connection with apostolic Christianity. I acknowledge also, that the tone of their writings is different from that indicated in this address, and that there may be found among them positive expressions which, if taken separately, would deny the principles which I have set forth. Still, I do not think that the appeal to the Fathers affects any change, or that they, when thoroughly considered, contradict these principles. I would not place the Fathers in opposition to the Word of God, for that is not true. But there can be traced, and that too soon, their divergencies from that standard.

The Apostles alone, of all men, except Christ, were able to stand up independently and equally for all truth—in itself, and its proportions, and against all men. So soon as the revealing Spirit and guiding hand of God were removed from the Church, the results of human weakness and imperfection made their appearance. The Fathers of the Church, wanting direct inspiration, did not forsake the truths of revelation, but with it received also influences from the surrounding world. Jewish tradition, Grecian philosophy, and Gentile worship began to give complexion to the Church's doctrines. These causes, together with their own position and the spirit of the age, gave to their opinions a positive and objective extreme, that was beyond the scriptural basis. Probably with most, they were not able to bear the weight of the subjective argument. It did not suit their intellectual habits, nor the tendency of the age. But let us consider simply their practical condition: sincere, but not always learned men, struggling daily for the actual existence of the Church and of themselves. It was a time when professed Christianity—the visible Church—was opposed to the world, and the world to it. Objective Christianity was the subject of the world's persecution. Separation from that was escape from danger, but was also faithlessness and apostasy. Denying the fellowship of the Church and its sufferings, a man might have speculated for ever in safety upon subjective Christianity. But he would have been renounced and justly renounced by the faithful. Standing faithfully by the Church, in her visible form and under her leaders, battling with her enemies unto sufferings and death, made the confessor and martyr. Repudiating these made the apostate. Refusing obedience to the Church's authorities, the schismatic. Denying her received doctrines, the heretic. Every one knows that these were the practical points. It was these that gave character and vehemence to the writings of Cyprian, the strongest of the objective advocates. In connection with these known truths, we must consider the expressions of the Fathers. "If," says Hooker—and I am glad to fortify my opinion with the strength of his judgment—"the

Fathers do anywhere, so often times they do, make the true visible Church of Christ and heretical companies opposite, they are to be construed as separating heretics not altogether from the company of believers, but from the fellowship of sound believers. For where professed unbelief is, there can be no visible Church of Christ; there may, where sound belief wanteth." They ought to be so construed. Truth and equity demand it. Yet I am not at all sure that it would always have suited their temper to be so dealt with. The truth is, the Fathers were in strong and deadly contest for the organized Church. They were therefore close in their Church unity—rigidly tenacious of order—severe in their discipline—intolerant of schismatics and heretics. But, after all, they never did make the Church's organization of the essence of her being, or found her sacraments upon her orders. They regulated the administration of the sacraments by orders, so as to preserve the authority and unity of the Church, and the dignity of the sacraments. But they did not affect to create them by the quality of the administrator. The idea of Priests' making sacraments is Romish. It is not catholic faith, but Popery.

Let me give a few instances in proof of what I say. I refer, first, to the well-known case that martyrdom was considered by them as a substitute for baptism. So that every martyr would receive the salvation of Christ, though unbaptized. Now, upon what ground? Not that it was an appointed substitute; that was not pretended. Nor is there one word like it in the whole Bible. No; their real ground was, that the substance or being of the sacrament was in its grace, not in its outward administration; and where was the grace of the sacrament, there was its effect. Or, what is the same thing, there was essential salvation in the being of the Church, not in its outward form. Again, it was as universally held that catechumens, dying without baptism, yet with repentance and faith, were considered as having it—that is, were saved without it. How, if the order of the Church were essential to salvation? Moreover, it was held that these catechumens, while living, were,

in some sense, within the pale of the Church, and were reckoned among the orders of the Church. One more instance more strongly illustrative. I hold myself at liberty to say, that the validity of lay baptism was the doctrine of the primitive Fathers. The few opinions to the contrary in modern times cannot turn aside the almost universal testimony; and it is susceptible of clear proof. I think there are few ecclesiastical students who will deny it. I know it is said that Cyprian and his party determined otherwise; but they did not; and it is to the very controversy in which they were enlisted, I intend to refer. Cyprian did not contend that the baptism of a layman in the catholic Church was void. He maintained that the baptism, and all acts of schismatic Priests were void. And this, because schismatics could not give the Holy Ghost—that the Holy Ghost did not accompany their administrations. And as the substance of the sacrament was in the grace of the sacrament, which was the gift of the Holy Ghost, therefore schismatics could not give the sacrament. Nor did his opponents contend that such baptisms were valid because their administrators were Priests; for it was the rule of the Church, that schismatic Priests were but laymen, in ecclesiastical estimation, while their schism continued. Their true doctrine was, that the substance of the sacrament was not dependent upon the order of the administrator, but upon the institution itself—the authority of Christ, the faith, and the element. And where these were, there was a valid sacrament. I repeat, then, that the distinction between the being and order of the Church was held by the early Fathers, and that where their language seems to be otherwise, it must be referred to discipline, not to doctrine—to the Church's constitution, not to her fundamentals. They were in a state of warfare, and their language was severe against deserters, or those whom they supposed to be such.

I will now refer to another point, not as necessary to my subject, but as carrying with it serious practical consequences, and a right understanding of which is valuable to the comfort of our own minds. They who maintain that the order of the Church is of its essence,

and that Episcopacy is its ministerial order, necessarily hold that they who are not in union with Episcopacy are not members of the Church. The charge is brought against them, that they are uncharitable. They declare it unjust. Yet still, probably, they feel it, and feel more the painfulness and estrangement that is sometimes created. They say in reply, that they acknowledge all the obligations of charity, and seek to cultivate it, and that they do not deny the Christian character to others—that they are partakers of salvation—if you please, better Christians than themselves, and to shine hereafter more in the kingdom of heaven. They say also in their turn, that their brethren holding with them the Episcopal order, are guilty of a weakness of charity or of error, in not firmly upholding the truth and its consequences. Now let us consider. Charity falls not within the sphere of logic. Her demands are not contravened by the deductions of the understanding. And every truth is exclusive of every thing but truth. The question then is one of evangelic verity. And standing, as I suppose, on this ground only, I oppose myself to this doctrine and its conclusions. My reasons, for the most part, I have given already. But I wish to present one view. It is said that those possessing pious character, but not belonging to the Episcopacy, are not of the Church, but they are Christians, single Christians, each one accepted in the sight of God, and secure of salvation. Now I maintain that a single, separated Christian is an anomalous conception. And more than that, this isolating spirit among men is an antichrist and a deceiver. It is prevailing, alas, with too many, in keeping them away from professed Christianity, and perilling their souls. Strange, that it should be assumed by those who are most tenacious of Church adherences, and who thus, when they least intend it, are playing into the enemy's hands. I say that individualism is foreign to the genius of Christ's Church. There is individuality in the Church; but Christian individuality out of the Church, is a delusion and an emptiness. You cannot hang upon it one rightly proportioned Christian idea. Whenever a Christian is conceived, he is so conceived by virtue of his connection

with Christ's Church, at least fundamentally. Whoever heard of as many separated dispensations from God as there are Christians in the world? One to each! No, there is but one catholic dispensation to men in Christ Jesus. Redemption is common, founded upon common sin, and bringing to it common deliverance. The notion of the Church is community. Believers are the company of believers. No man liveth to himself. The benefits of redemption are through administrations of community. What is the meaning of the ministry, the sacraments, the Lord's day, the house of God, and all else, if this is not the idea? No; you may break Christianity to pieces as much as you please, but this is the radical truth that will come back upon you. You may break it to pieces and still you shall find the power of its associative law. Men do not separate themselves into individualities, but into associations, societies, and each still calls itself a Church. If there are Christians among them, it is as belonging to the Church. For, rightly received, the maxim is true, Out of the Church there is no salvation. But besides, go to these individual Christians and ask them how they have become such. Will they tell you, by knowledge and grace from heaven, apart from all the rest of mankind? Nothing can be farther from the truth. Whatever they know, whatever they are, it has been, under God who so ordained it, the result of associated Christianity. Thus they learned at their mother's knee; thus they were baptized into Christ—itsself a sacrament of fellowship; thus were the instructions of the Sunday-school, of God's house, of all. And through these only have they been able to trace the living influences that save them. Are these persons Christians? Yes; that all grant. Are they members of the Church? Yes; they must be so, to be Christians. The difficulties may be very great in adjusting the proportions of doctrine in every case, but we cannot surrender fundamental truth, or the idea of fellowship and community, in the Church of Christ. The truth is, brethren, our fathers had a much truer and wider grasp upon this subject than we have. From the days of Cranmer to those of Charles the First, no other doctrine was taught, but that which

I have set forth. And even after opposite views were published, it seemed more for the purpose of upholding the Church in her visible existence against her opposers, than of denying these principles of her foundation. Certain it is, that nowhere are these principles more clearly upheld and ably advocated, than in Archbishop Laud's controversy with the Jesuits, and in Bishop Stillingfleet's extension of that controversy. These principles may be seen, too, even in the mutual admissions of Protestant and Romish controvertists. When the advocate of Rome represents what is catholic only, he is clear and consistent enough. It is Popery that overshadows and displaces all. And what is the reason that Popery denies Church character to the rest of the world? Why are Protestants not in the Church? It is, as by them urged, because of schism. They are not in ecclesiastical union with the Pope. This it is, and not the formal denial of the principles I am advocating. And we, too, are placed in circumstances not favorable to real catholic views. Protestants are divided into parties; and there is a strong disposition to make the limits of a party the limits of Christianity. But God seeth not as we see. And the great and universal verities of faith are not to be overturned by external relations.

But I come, now, to another branch of my subject, only less in importance than that upon which I have already spoken at large—the Church's organization—her external constitution and economy. Rightly to adjust and fix the proportions of the Church—her order and essence—her organic structure, and her inward life—this is the great attainment. It is only when properly united, as a co-organic whole, that the Church can be known, either in her beauty or her power. God is not the Author of confusion and of separation, but of order and of union. Not of order without life—this a corpse might have—but of life informing order, and giving it purpose and power. Not of life without order, thus thwarting the unity of wisdom, and breaking in pieces truth's perfect mirror, making it reflect many images instead of one; but of order with life, as life's form and

manifestation. Now let us ask ourselves, in simple honesty, is it not too much the spirit of the times to embrace one or more prominent points of Christianity, and give to them undue prominence—to displace other truths, or absorb them into those we have embraced? What is the conviction that comes upon the mind, as we look upon our divided Christianity? Not that the various sects want truth, but they want proportioned truth, with her complete relations and foundations. They are fragmentary, not entire. They want the mould, in which to form a catholic mind. That must be entire. To have it so, is what we want. And to have it so, every truth must have its due place. If it be an extreme, and an injurious and erroneous one, as it certainly is, to contend that the life of the individual Christian is all, and that we need care little or nothing for the Church's divine original and standard constitution, is it not a like extreme to affirm that the Church's order is of the essence of her existence? Why should this be done? I can see no necessity for it—no reason in it. Yet this has been made the test. But why? Why should any, however inflexible in maintaining the Church's divine institution and permanent standard, insist upon this? It is very greatly to be regretted. It disunites hearts, and is an entering wedge of separation. But this ought to be borne, if it were necessary for truth's sake. But it is not, and is making false issues. Brethren, why should we not all stand upon the right platform—say at once that the Church's order is but *order*?

This is the true ground, and when we stand on this, there may fairly be, and probably ever will be, differences of opinion among us. Let these be earnestly considered and fairly argued, for they are important—sometimes they become very important in application, the life of faith may depend upon them. But here alone are the true distinctions of churchmanship, high or low, or whatever else you may choose. But when it is insisted that order is essence, that the Church's organization is her being, there is no longer discussion upon a true and common ground, but a false change of the ground itself,

and the introduction of confusion and misconstruction. Let then our position be true, and if we can succeed in combining with it all revealed truth, with its living energy, uniting thus harmony and strength, we shall be fully armed against all opponents.

I have said, in a previous part of this address, that the Epistles of the New Testament contemplate the body of believers as constituting the Church. I repeat it, this is with them ever the radical truth. Their address is always, "To all the saints which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." "To the saints, and faithful brethren in Christ, which are at Colosse." "Unto the Church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ." But now I say, *also*, that the Church is always considered as a society in unity in itself; and as deriving its existence, its authority, its ordinances, and co-operative influences of life, from God only. There is no such thing as any Church rights derived from their voluntary association, or from themselves at all. But even in a smaller matter they are asked, "What, came the word of God out from you, or came it unto you only?" The address in the Epistle to the Ephesians is, "To the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." But how so made? By their own voluntary compact? Not at all, "They were chosen by God, before the foundation of the world"—"predestinated by Him, unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will," and by Him "called," "justified," "glorified." And when thus brought together, how existing? "There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord; one faith; one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all," and "from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." The proper form of Christ's Church is unity—unity founded upon divine truth, and cemented by charity. Every thing that comes from God's hands is a unity. Departure from

this is sin's history. Can we suppose that this rule would not be adhered to in the creation of Christ's body, that the Holy Ghost would not make provision for the unity of the Church? If we think so, a careful study of the New Testament will correct our error.

If this be so, then the present condition of the Christian world is a departure from primitive and original form, and is abnormal. And, in very sadness, so it is. Who does not see it? Who does not feel it? Who does not meet it on every hand? We cannot rejoice in this. Nor will we follow the example of Ham, but with his brothers cover over these deformities with averted face. Now, however we may have hope in this divided state of Christianity, it is an error and evil. An evil to be justified only by the avoidance of greater evil. We believe that Popery is chiefly answerable for this work of separation in God's house. But we must say, in sober truth, that much of it cannot be justified at all. Let us think of it, however, as we will, it still is what it is—a departure from the propriety of original Christianity, not presenting the proper and formal notion of the Church. With this distracted and broken representation of our faith, a Christian in whose mind is the true ideal cannot be in harmony.

But this is not all. It is not given to men to disturb with impunity the arrangements of God. His providence is full of "living creatures," the ambassadors of his will. Alive are all God's works. From human conduct there must be results and retributions; and they come from above. Look abroad over our country and tell me, what do you deem the greatest enemy to Christian faith in this land? Is it Popery? I think not, as a destructive system. It is the tendency of Popery to corrupt faith, not to destroy it. But there is a spirit abroad that infects with its pestilential influence the very life of all faith, and is daily slaying its thousands. It is licentiousness of opinion, exhibiting itself under all forms of scepticism and unbelief. The result is disregard of the most sacred institutions and the most settled faith—shocking forms of fierce fanaticism and unclean living—all justifying themselves under the new

developments of reason. There is something even more startling than this—the formal attitude of intelligent minds deliberately opposing themselves to the obligations of faith. And these all have with them popular sanction, the pride of reason, and the spirit of the world. If we were contending with human strength, we might well tremble for the Ark of God. But we fear them not. No, not the least. There is not a single tremor in the most acute nerve of our faith. “Stronger is He that is for us, than he who is against us.” “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.” What, then, is our strength? It is faith; we must plead Christ. To every enemy, we must turn with the armor of gospel righteousness. We must contend not only for the truth, but for the Church of Christ, and for submission to both upon the principle of faith. We fully believe that these things are the effects of dividing more and more from the established truths and ordinances of Christ—of unsanctified self-reliance and separation from God. We must meet the spirit of the world with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. We must claim for our whole religion divine origin, sanction by God. The Church is divine. It is not from men, nor of men. From heaven its truth is revealed. From heaven its authority imparted. It is no voluntary society. It does not spring from any internal illumination of reason, calling itself revelation. No, it is from above; and all its divine and living influences are from above to us. It has organization, and authority, and unity, and permanence. These are its great principles. Episcopacy is incidental. Its truth is, that it is of God’s appointment. Its power, that it is linked in with these greater truths. It is the form and the government for securing these ends. It is the permanent standard of the Church. And in experience we find its salutary influence, when rightly administered, justly graduated throughout, and proportioning itself to the ends of its creation.

Into the claims and history of the Episcopal constitution, I shall not enter. It is not necessary to any one before me. I have been addressing myself to those who receive the Church of Christ under this form. Be-

lieving it, not with absolute exclusiveness, but with integral propriety and truth, to be *the Church*, I have sought to set forth its relative and component truths. What I have said has been under the consciousness of much weakness. Such as it is, I commit it to your understanding and faith.